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5 EAST 46th STREET, NEW YORK 17, NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN COUNCIL OF LEARNED SOCIETIES

The American Council of Learned Societies is a private non-profit federation of thirty national scholarly organizations concerned with the humanities and the humanistic aspects of the social sciences.

The object of the American Council of Learned Societies, as set forth in its constitution, is "the advancement of humanistic studies in all fields of learning and the maintenance and strengthening of relations among the national societies devoted to such studies."

The Council was organized in 1919 and incorporated in the District of Columbia in 1924. Its principal support comes from the philanthropic foundations, supplemented, on occasion, by government contracts for specific enterprises.

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CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

This Conference took place at the Hotel Shoreland in Chicago, April 18-19, 1959. The full title was Conference on the State of Studies, Research, and Teaching in the History of Religions, in the United States and Canada, and Means for Their Improvement. The Conference was organized by the ACLS Committee on the History of Religions. The official participants numbered thirty; they came, severally, from fourteen institutions in the United States and two in Canada.

Meeting in three sessions, the Conference at the outset assessed the present state of scientific studies of religion. A number of pertinent statements, prepared and circulated in advance, gave background and direction for the discussion.

In the first session two conclusions were arrived at which on first consideration may seem to be paradoxical: (1) the number of thoroughly competent scholars in the scientific study of religions is most unfortunately small; (2) the need for properly trained teachers is great at the undergraduate level where courses in the history of religions, comparative religion, and "world" religions can probably be counted in the hundreds. As a result, this instruction is in the great majority of cases assigned to persons whose training and interests are in other fields. Good textbooks and other teaching materials are not easy to come by, particularly in relation to the varieties of local needs. The burden on the teacher, if he wishes to do the job well from a scholarly point of view, is a heavy one, and the yoke is not a comfortable collar.

Why then, are there not more scholars in this speciality, or students intending to become scholars? A quick estimate given by members of the Conference (in which were represented all or nearly all of the institutions in the United States and Canada offering work towards the Ph.D. in religions) was that there are a maximum of 25 doctoral candidates at present in the field. But there are very few academic positions in which the teaching of the history of religions can be more than a sideline. In both training and practice the field is inter-disciplinary. The student, teacher, or scholar engaged in research ordinarily has another, and probably a major, concern: theology, philosophy, art, language and area studies, cultural history, psychology, sociology, anthropology. The language requirements are many for the study of the history and philosophy of Christianity alone and to these, for certain kinds of specialization, additional languages are essential.

The content of the second and evening session came for the most part from a paper, "Religionswissenschaft," by Erwin R. Goodenough, chairman of the Committee on the History of Religions. (The paper, in full, follows these notes on the Conference.) In presenting his own views on religion and the possibility of a mature faith, Mr. Goodenough gave a philosophical ground for the third session of the Conference, to be concluded the following day.

There is in this country or Canada no national learned society devoted to the advancement of the scholarly study of the history of religions; and, up to the present time, the United States has been represented in the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) by the ACLS Committee on the History of Religions. The major purpose of the Conference was to attempt to determine, after both a factual and philosophical analysis, whether a new society should be organized. The answer to this question, given during the final session, was emphatically affirmative. An organization, christened The American Society for the Study of Religion, was formed and, startlingly enough, dues were given to the chairman during the course of the meeting.

A committee of the Conference had prepared a statement the previous evening which set forth the bases for a constitution for the proposed new society. This statement was, after minor revisions, adopted by the Conference. The following articles are of general interest:

- "(1) The objectives of this Society are to promote the *scholarly* study and teaching of religion in its various forms and to foster communication among those who are engaged in *historical or other academic studies in this field*.
- "(2) Its chief activities are:
 - (a) holding meetings periodically and engaging in such other activities as may seem desirable to its members; and
 - (b) as a branch organization for Canada and the United States, participating in the work of the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR).
- "(3) The charter membership shall consist of all those among the persons invited to this Conference (April 18-19, 1959) by the ACLS, whether in attendance or not, who signify their desire to join the Society. Further membership will be on invitation.
- "(4) The following persons are nominated to serve as an organizing committee:

Walter Harrelson (University of Chicago), *chairman*
 Charles Adams (McGill University)
 Robert Bellah (Harvard University)
 Mircea Eliade (University of Chicago)
 Erwin R. Goodenough (Yale University)
 Kenneth Morgan (Colgate University)
 Wilfred Cantwell Smith (McGill University)
 Jacob Taubes (Columbia University)

This committee shall:

- (a) draft statutes and circulate them among the prospective members for discussion and approval;
- (b) nominate officers according to the terms of the statutes;
- (c) make all necessary arrangements for a meeting of the Society, approximately in a year; and
- (d) make due application for membership in the IAHR."

RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT

E. R. GOODENOUGH

The honor has been given me of trying to formulate what might be the objective of an American Society for the History of Religions. I begin fully aware that most of you could speak on the subject at least as competently as myself, and so address you in humility, and in the hope that by your corrections I may understand much more, and more accurately, than I do now as I read to you.

I shall keep closely to my subject. Tomorrow we may talk of the feasibility: do we need, or have we time for, such a society; how could it be organized and administered; and what should be our criteria for admission to membership? We cannot, however, profitably begin with such matters. Much more important is it that we first see clearly whether we really have a common interest, and, if so, whether that interest is sufficiently deep and wide to constitute the *raison d'être* of a new society. Iranians used to ask whether the soul or the body of man was created first. They firmly decided that Ohrmuzd must have begun with the soul, since the body could have meaning only as a house for the soul. We shall gain little by creating a new society as a body, and then looking about for a soul to inhabit it.

My business is not to play at being Ohrmuzd by creating a soul. I would not stand here, however, if I did not believe that there is a spirit floating about in our generation which, if we can identify and capture it, would do well with a body. In more prosaic speech, we all know that from the beginning the study of the History of Religions was regarded as only one approach to Religionswissenschaft. I can still see no other value in the study of the History of Religions than its contribution to Religionswissenschaft, and so ask at once what we mean by religion, what would be the concern of a Religionswissenschaft, and how the History of Religions can contribute to it. On this matter we will never agree, because most scholars want to define religion in such a way that religion is distinguished from other aspects of life. I, for one, do not like such definitions, and think we only hamper ourselves by them. One such distinction draws a sharp cleavage between the religious and irreligious man. To Eliade, whose brilliant new book, *The Sacred and the Profane*, I have just finished, a man marks himself as being religious insofar as he recognizes the essential differences between the sacred and the profane, in his thinking and actions, while the irreligious man has lost a sense of the sacred, and lives in a world of natural cause and effect, where nothing seems to have any specially numinous quality. Eliade himself, however, in advocating and practising so effectively an analytical study of the objects and moods of reverence, will seem irreligious to the mass of men who are religious by his own definition, because to them such analysis should never be applied to the numinous at all. People who believe that their own religion rests upon

a unique revelation, that is, the overwhelming majority of practitioners of religions everywhere, can accept an analytical study of other people's religions, because these seem unfortunate perversions or misconceptions, not real religion. For most believers and practitioners the sort of analytical study which *Wissenschaft* implies has no application to the true faith. In this, as in other matters, we can trust Eliade to take care of himself. The point I raise is the point generally raised, whether scientific, or empirical, or dispassionate analysis has any right to approach religion. If we define religion in such a way that it has no essential relation to other experiences of life, we obviously cannot use with religion the methods of study or thought applicable to those other aspects.

Our contemporaries in all directions urge upon us the futility of *Religionswissenschaft*. During the last twenty-five years especially we have been hearing how science, philosophy, and religion move on different levels of knowledge, and that through revelation we go beyond the whole scientific method, because science must draw its conclusions from analyses of material data that can be counted and measured. The religious man's intellectual problem on the contrary, it is argued, is essentially to comprehend the depths and implications of revealed truth. To people who thus divide their ways of thinking, any attempt at a Science of Religion runs into absurdity, is a basic contradiction of terms. It violates the essential difference between sacred and profane. For it is to treat the holy, the numinous, the religious, as though it were a matter for profane scientific scrutiny. Nearly a century ago the great Canon Sanday of Oxford, torn between the new analytical temper and his own devout faith in Anglican Christianity, cried out in agony, "We kill in order to dissect." The agony has since then proved too much for many of our most sensitive spirits. Perhaps they will practise science, do so brilliantly, so long as they can keep up the wall of utter contrast between the sacred and the profane, and do their science in such fields as not to impinge on what they call sacred. But the Science of Religion is meaningless unless we see that it essentially breaks this down, and proposes precisely in the realm of the religious to move from empirical data to hypothesis, and from hypothesis back to data, and to correct hypotheses by data, as nearly as possible in scientific fashion. It will have no meaning unless we do so with the data of all religions, with the data of the religion we were early taught to love quite as fully as with the religions of Asia, Central Africa, or Australia.

Hereby, it seems, we may perhaps see why study of the History of Religion, or of *Religionswissenschaft*, has now generally declined, and has never gained any recognized place among the departments of American universities at all. A century ago, those who felt most torn in Europe were the men who, like Sanday, applied the new methods of historical criticism to the Bible. American scholars went to Europe during the last half of the nineteenth century, and learned the methods of European criticism, and brought back the German solution of Ritschl and Harnack, that the *Wesen* of Christianity is its social and ethical teaching, a facile solution which Schweitzer

very effectively exploded at its roots. Almost simultaneously the Papal Bull of 1912 rejected all such analytical methods for Catholics, and I cannot see how the Pope could have made any other decision. For the analytical study of the sources of Christianity did indeed break down the old distinctions between the sacred and the profane. What had to be God's Word for the Church, for Protestants, really, as well as Catholics, had in the hands of historians become a collection of historical documents, from which history was to be gleaned by only the most rigorously detached scrutiny. I recall Kirsop Lake's saying once to a graduate class, "The genuineness of a saying attributed to Jesus can be judged only by men free if necessary to say without emotion that, so far as they can see, Jesus did teach in the way under discussion, but that on this point they disagreed with Jesus." The historian might reject or accept the saying attributed to Jesus as authentic, but not on personal or ecclesiastical grounds. From the point of view of the historian, Lake was absolutely right: we cannot let our own or our church's ideas or preferences interfere consciously or unconsciously with our decisions as to what Jesus did or did not teach. But the Pope was right in saying that such an attitude does indeed break down the safeguards of the sacred as the Church has to conceive it if the Church is to continue at all in its traditional way.

Meanwhile in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries men studied the myths and rituals of the world with increasing detachment. The relative merits of Max Müller's school of cosmic origin, Durkheim's social-totemistic origin, Tyler's animism, and Marett's mana, with a variety of other suggestions, could be debated with complete freedom in a secular world whose leaders largely thought in the new channels of a boundlessly optimistic evolutionism. The crudity of man's roots only emphasized the beauty and value of the emergent tree, the civilization of William II of Germany, Edward VII of England, and William Howard Taft of America. For many devout people revelation became progressive revelation, and scholars delighted to trace the evolution from the crude Yahweh of the Book of Judges to the Christian God, who, finally, could "love" but not "desire." Frazer became a household word. Anthropologists concerned themselves largely to gather material on the religions of the world. The new scientific criticism invaded the four leading American centers of religious study, the Divinity Schools of Harvard, Yale, Union, and Chicago. No one who heard them will ever forget the great lectures on the history of religion given by George Foote Moore.

America's special contribution to the analysis of religion, however, was made by our psychologists. While all the leaders of thinking in the history of religion were Europeans or English, and Americans were eagerly reading their books, all Europe and England were reading William James, Starbuck, Leuba, and Pratt. These men had a new and startling view of the roots of religion, roots not in a past perhaps a hundred millenia comfortably removed, but in our own immediate and personal psyches. Religious individualism

of America had split the social organization of religion into a hundred controverting fragments, and Americans regarded religion as a private matter in which the State should never interfere except to protect individuals and minorities. Through practically inventing new approaches to the psychology of religion, this American spirit made its idiomatic contribution to the scientific study of religion, a contribution that Europeans with their state churches did not attempt to rival. You will all object, perhaps, that Schleiermacher, Herbert Spencer, and Louis Sabatier had followers when they, each in his own way, proposed a more individual and psychological approach. But Europe and England generally agreed with Durkheim at least in his minimizing such movements, and defining religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, which bring their adherents into a single moral community called the Church. Even so great an individualist as Freud all his life saw in religion a block of entrenched beliefs and practices which he had to fight in order to protect the individualistic approach of his own psychology. He thought he was fighting religion, when, as it seems to me, he was founding and practising one of his own.

Since the series of collapses which followed upon the catastrophe of 1914 the scientific study of religion has fallen off rapidly. Depression took hold of the defeated Germans of 1918, and in this condition their religious leaders, succumbing to the magic of Paul Barth, regarded the scientific approach to anything whatever as the great sin of men, who only made fools of themselves when they supposed that by taking thought they could add to their stature. Christian revelation, the new-old theology said, had taught man the complete sovereignty of God, the pusillanimity of man, and the sacrilege of supposing that man's critical study of anything, religion least of all, could hope to improve man's essential way of life. Two new words for the profane became widely current, namely science and history, and Barth and his followers would fain lead men not only out of a damning preoccupation with their study, but altogether out of the world these words imply, lead men to a world in which they find their existence in a metaphysical reality where time, space, and matter have no meaning.

The great financial depression of the late twenties and thirties made such an escape from the world of science and history deeply attractive also to frightened and discouraged men and women of England, France, and America. With the horrors of the Hitlerian war, more and more people, from different points of view, came to accept the new emphasis upon the inherent sinfulness of man and the mockery of his analytical and scientific efforts. Science only makes instruments to destroy us, people cry out in terror, and to them this demonstrates the inherently depraved nature of science, a doctrine, incidentally, they are not above broadcasting by the latest scientific gadgets. The modern age is reenacting the tragedy of all Greek drama, they say, the tragedy that the gods inevitably bring destruction upon men who in hybris try to do the superhuman. One of the leaders of this sort of thinking loves to describe how God rocks in derision on his throne at the

spectacle of man's trying by science to help himself, to improve himself in what this preacher calls the world of history. Man's only hope is in a divine act of revelation. The contents of this revelation we can examine, formulate, assimilate, but the critical attitude of science has no relevance to it. I recently listened to a discussion of the bearing of psychology, both experimental and depth psychology, on theology. Clearly most of those in the room considered that the criteria for examining ordinary psychological experiences had no relevance to man's experience of God and revelation. Science was very well in its place, but as a man-made thing it was futile, hopeless, and entirely impious, if it invaded the field of religion.

Theological schools and religious leaders now largely preach variations in this message of human futility. It is exactly at such a time, and surrounded by such an atmosphere, that we meet to consider the possibilities of founding a society in the United States and Canada to renew and propagate the study of History of Religions as a facet of Religionswissenschaft. In spite of a scattered remnant, it is precisely Religionswissenschaft in any meaningful sense that the religious leaders of our generation have rejected. Are we ready to face the world as a group prepared and eager to modify our operating hypotheses, which in religion means our faiths, if scrutiny of empirical data makes them dubious or suggests better ones?

The remnant of historians of religion with scientific attitude, a remnant which as far as possible we have tried to gather here, is now largely scattered in a wide variety of fields: linguistics, anthropology, area studies, sociology, and the like. Leaders in these fields have in large part accepted the old definitions of religion, by which such scholars are not only classed as irreligious by most contemporary religious leaders, but are delighted to find themselves thus described, and call themselves irreligious. Scholars in these fields, consequently, have in general turned their attention to other things than what they consider religion. Most anthropologists now have only tangential interest in religious phenomena. Not by chance did anthropologists study religions avidly a century ago, and now study social structure. Religion was the burning issue then. Now social structure, by the rise of Communism, the threats of the dictatorships, and the problems of industrial relations, stands at the forefront of all our minds. We must not fool ourselves: our scholarship reflects our own basic problems, and the modern intelligentsia feel these social problems much more intensely than the problem of the sacred and the profane.

The same change has occurred in psychology, which has largely tried to become scientific by asking only questions that can be answered by counting and measuring. The psyche as a whole lies quite beyond such control, so at times modern psychology seems almost obsessed with what one might call psychophobia. One cannot set up problems of the sacred and profane in a rat maze and one does not try to do so. Consequently, I know no really important book on the psychology of religion published in the last thirty-five years. Psychologists who work in personality testing have not tried to develop tests that would show sensitivity to the sacred and profane. We have tests of aptitude for almost everything except for reverence of the "sacred."

The great psychologists that have come out of psychoanalysis have divided sharply on this point. Freud, as I said, tried to brush away the whole matter by showing that the illusion of credal religion was doomed to collapse before such a deeper understanding of man as he was offering. We may well doubt that Freudianism, as it was systematized by his orthodox followers, is any less illusory as a final statement of the nature of man than the statements Freud characterized as illusions; but Freud provokes us to ask whether authoritatively-drawn distinctions between the sacred and the profane, what Freud accepted as being religion from the religious experts of his day, really constitute religion, and whether their acceptance basically mark the *homo religiosus*. Jung went further when he put this whole psychology upon a religious basis by proposing that all individuals have their foundation in the collective unconscious. This conception we might well call Mana in direct action, or the panpsychism that has haunted Western thinking from Aristotle to Hegel, and which really underlies Buddhism and Hinduism. I am not a Jungian, but we must admit that Jung has done more than any one man of our generation to keep from utter neglect the problems which world-wide similarities in religious experience thrust before us. I must digress a moment to record that among the great experiences of my own life, not generally known, were the hours in 1938 which Jung spent in my own study (not I in his as a patient), when the already huge mass of my material on symbols threatened to overwhelm me, and when, to use his term, I was trying to "integrate" it all by, as always, integrating myself. As the great therapist he is, he helped me largely by encouraging me to help myself, not by telling me how I should regard the material. There is healing in his wings. Many of you are here because of his influence. But Jung, let us face it, has generally been rejected by our generation, those who call themselves religious and those who call themselves irreligious, and behind rejection of such a brilliant way of thinking must lie a reason. The reason, if in one reason I may summarize the many, is that somehow he has not spoken the word this generation wants to hear. To his ideas, however, we shall keep recurring, not only in this paper, but in all our studies.

This generation wants either an assurance that its true existence is not in the scientific world, or it wants analytical precision. So if Religionswissenschaft has suffered from those who wanted to take religion out of science, it has suffered almost as much from the new and specialized sciences, which, in their highly proper craving for precision, have taken science away from religious studies. Linguistic science, for example, has captivated most of the best minds who have gone into Sinology, Indology, and Islamic studies. Or documentary history, and precision in textual editing, now dominate the minds of young men who came into our Departments with quite other objectives. The professors have felt that generalizations about the *Religiosität* of the documents might well await accurate texts and genuine *Sprachgefühl*. Who could assail such impeccable and impregnable correctness? Who but those of us still interested in *Religiosität*, since we find ourselves deserted

not only by the new theology, but also by those who through their technical skills could help us most? In these Departments, as many of you eloquently witness by your presence here, a remnant of the old interest survives in many people, who still read the religious classics with deep perception of their religious as well as linguistic or literary value. The greatest scientists of our day, however, are by no means denouncing religion. They have little in common, as I know them, with the theologians who demand that scientists keep within their province of carding wool so that the theologians can weave their cloths. The best scientists I know are deeply devout persons who see the numinous through their telescopes or microscopes, and in their test tubes, not as an "other," but as the essential quality of matter, matter as exploding atoms, or galaxies, or as biological processes.

The hope of reviving study of the science of religion lies, I believe, not in courting the traditionalists and theologians, but in coming to recognize that science itself is a religious exercise, a new religion, and that science and religion have fallen apart largely because traditionalists have done what they have always done, failed to recognize a new approach to religion as it has formed itself in their midst, challenging thereby old conceptions and comfortably formulated adjustments. Historians of Religions, that is, must include in their study, and in their sympathy, the new religion of science, or of scientists, along with the religions and thoughtways they have hitherto considered. This needs a bit more explaining.

For the term religion of science to have any meaning, we must obviously return to ask what we mean by religion, since by the old definitions the two are essentially in contrast. If a society for the study of the history of religion emerges from this gathering, its members will, and should, ask no question more often than what is religion. I have no illusion that I shall do more than start us off with the problem.

As an historian rather than a philosopher, I must say that no definition of religion I have ever heard, or made (and I have made many), has any but suggestive and partial value. The most important words, of course, can never be defined, and deeper understanding of them usually involves discovering the inadequacy of old definitions. Even so precise a term as chemistry can no longer be defined. What, today, is it? Who will now sharply distinguish it from physics or botany? Certainly not the students of chemistry themselves. Nuclear physics can be studied apart from chemistry, or biology, or astronomy, to a point, but only to a point. *A fortiori*, who can set up any but pretty verbal barriers between history, science, and philosophy? Similarly Freudians have come to understand sex better as they have confused the rest of us by seeing its manifestations everywhere, even in the conduct of infants. Man is a physiological animal, a sexual animal, a political animal, an economic animal, a social animal. He is also a religious animal. He is all of these simultaneously, for beneath the distinctive terms is man himself. Those who study man from one point of view rather than another always tend to see their own approach as the one really all-encompassing in human

structure. The function and goal of Religionswissenschaft is to come better to understand the *homo religiosus*. But all these approaches blend so inextricably that to define the character and compass of any one aspect invades the boundaries of every other. If we do not recognize this we limit to the point of petty distortion the aspect we try to define. Sociologists and psychologists have no notion of defining their fields in such a way as to exclude the other, or, in fact, of excluding man's religious patterns. Religion, in turn, cannot be forced to define itself in such a way as not to impinge upon, indeed largely to include, at least sociology and psychology. So, if we are not by verbal calisthenics to weaken our understanding of all these fields, we must resort to description which moves from an essential center indefinitely outward, rather than fabricate definitions that work from borders inward.

In brief, then, I see religion arising from the universal phenomenon that we are born and live in an external universe, and with internal depth and emotions, which we neither understand nor control. Man exists largely helpless before the forces of nature and society, and really knows nothing basic about himself, and the meaning and purpose of life, individually or collectively. The conscious mind, and probably even more persistently the unconscious mind, are always confronted by the tremendum, both within oneself and without. By modern science man has to a slight degree mitigated the sense of helplessness and confusion he feels before the tremendum, but now when men collectively know more than ever in history, we call ourselves the Age of Anxiety, because we are freshly, almost pathologically, sensitive to the ignorance and helplessness that characterize us. Such ignorance has always characterized mankind, characterizes all animal life. But if an animal is hungry, while he looks eagerly for food, so far as we know he has no diffused anxiety about the problem of food supply. Or of death, or sex, or security in general. Without debating whether that be true for mice and rabbits, or for rats that have been psychologically tortured, this generalization will stand better than most, that awareness of our helplessness and ignorance, along with the anxiety they produce, generally characterizes human beings.

Religion steps in for all of us at this point. Man has never been able to accept himself on this level as helpless before the tremendum. He must have the illusion, at least, that he can do something to control the apparently uncontrollable, to explain the inexplicable. We may laugh at the savage stories of creation through a cosmic bull, or turtle, or egg, but the understanding most people in this room have of the process of evolution is probably just about as far from reality, and starts from quite as vague a protozoan, or protozoa, as the stories of the savages. It gives us comfort, nevertheless, to believe in evolution. Those least satisfied by the theory of evolution are my friends in biology who know how fragmentary and inadequate the whole theory really is. All great tragedy faces the unintelligibility of life, and terrifies us as it suddenly dangles our helpless ignorance before us. Shakespeare had no answers for Hamlet and Lear. The Oresteia loses its dignity when Athena at the end introduces a divine justice that exists in religion, not reality. For Aeschylus

had finally to succumb to his craving for divine consolation, and so he projected its reality as Socrates did not. But how few men in history have given their lives rather than deny their own ignorance! For one such man there have been untold millions of Athenian citizens who would murder, and not always mercifully by hemlock, a man who doubted the reality of the myths which they hold like curtains to screen themselves from the unintelligibility and uncontrollability of the tremendum.

Here seems the essence of religion, the problem of how man can live over against the great unknown, the tremendum. Traditional religions have given two basic answers. Most commonly man has screened himself off from the tremendum by mythical accounts of the origin and nature of things, by rites which would placate its unpredictable lightnings and whirlwinds, by holy places and seasons, by divinely given codes of laws. In all these ways man has tried to protect himself from what is, to him the chaos of the tremendum. Man has draped curtains about him, with fine paintings in perspective on them. This perspective could give him the illusion that he lives in the tremendum itself while the curtains actually only protect him from its impact. The patterns on other people's curtains are, of course, myths; those on our own are theology. The masses of men must get their myths, their rites, and their codes, their symbols, the designs on their curtains, from the traditions of their social groups. Few can escape them, or make new ones of their own. Since a few can do so, however, our myths of explanation and our rites for controlling nature, or fate, cannot be simply social institutions forced upon all. And those of us who break away are not thereby irreligious, else the Jewish prophets, the Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus were irreligious.

As over against the apotropaic, the second basic formulation is that in which an individual has broken the curtains, or lifted them, to go alone into the Alone, and to face the numinous tremendum in itself. Moses on Sinai, the prophets announcing their new visions, Jesus at Gethsemane, the Buddha as he left his earthly kingdom, many young savage candidates to achieve spiritual leadership in the tribe, these represent an utterly different conception of an adjustment to the universal reality from which most men screen themselves. These men left, or still leave, the formulation about them, to court the very tremendum itself, and be taken over by it. Buddhist monks practise this approach, and train the more intelligent laymen in it, though it has little appeal to the mass of Buddhists who live almost entirely in their apotropaic exercises.

The History of Religions examines this drive of man to adjust himself to the tremendum, the masses by screening themselves from it, others by freshly approaching it. About the tremendum itself as a whole we all come out with myths, of course, whether with traditional myths or ones of our own creation, since the tremendum as a whole is utterly too much for us. Practical living is impossible without a skeleton of myths that establish values and meaning. The myths of men have given them their courage both to live and love, and to destroy and kill. It is in the name of myths proclaiming a

meaning of life that Hitler and Lenin killed, and Gandhi refused to kill. All decisive action, in the last analysis all action and life, comes from faith, pure faith that the nature of the tremendum is thus, and so, and so, and that we have such or such relation to it. If true religion be a matter of formal revelation from the tremendum, however, those who assert that science and its methods have no relation to it cannot be disputed. In that case, a Society of the History of Religion would be a group collecting curious information about behavioral aberrations and strange myths, essentially not religious at all, because not a part of what we consider revelation. Its members might have much good information, and practical advice to give diplomats or business men in dealing with peoples of the world, but their work would have no relation to Religionswissenschaft. Perhaps we should assume, on the other hand, in Jungian terms, that religion is a matter of less formal, but no less real, invasion of humanity by the tremendum through the emergence of universally similar rites and myths. In that case, by accepting the Jungian hypothesis that these materials come to man through the Collective Unconscious, we can perhaps get increasing insights into the nature of the tremendum. But, to be brutal, this approach may well be only another method for obscuring from ourselves our ultimate ignorance, and of painting new designs, or a new term, on our curtains. Whether we think this fair to Jungians or not, most of our scientific colleagues would at once answer that the Jungian approach goes too rapidly from data to over-all conclusions.

Can a really objective approach to the value of the myths and practices of religions ever be found? Is one myth painted on the curtain as good as any other? Should we believe anything that makes living and dying comfortable, and destroy those who would shake our belief and so disturb our comfort? As one Catholic wrote me: "There are too many things we shall never know. Here it seems to me is the role of the revealed religions, of which there is only one true one, meaning mine, for the simple reason that Catholicism did it so much better than any other religion." This is, indeed, the usual pattern of religion, especially in the West, including modern Russia with its Gospel according to Marx. At this point the Science of Religion, with the History of Religions as one of its chief tools, can step in. For we shall believe that only our cowardice makes the tremendum terrible, and that so long as we admit our ignorance we can step up to the tremendum itself in matters of human value as physics does in matters of material value (if we can use the word material any more). The method of modern science is, unabashed by general ignorance of reality, to go to the great unknown with little questions that inch their way into bits, consistent bits, of knowledge. I believe that in the Science of Religion we must learn to do the same.

Personally, I do not see how in the modern world we have a right to speak of, or look for, a science of religion so long as we ourselves live within apotropaic curtains, or live with the stated purpose of having our personalities and critical faculties blurred out in mysticism. For we can no longer use the word "science" in its original sense of the Latin *Scientia*, or of Plato's *Episteme*.

Science now means, as I have said, a method of study in which, by the most exact methods applicable to a given sort of data, we draw up hypotheses from the data, and then verify (or reject) the hypotheses by some fresh return to the data, or by return to fresh data. A cataloguing of data, or a learned collection of information, can no longer pose as scientific knowledge, what the word *Wissenschaft* often meant a century ago. Scientific study takes empirical data, and tries to see the principles inherent in them. Science proverbially says it can do nothing with an isolated fact. It can do just as little with inherently miscellaneous facts. For what science seeks always is structural, inherent relationships.

In saying this about science we seem to have begun again describing religion since religion has been man's passionate attempt to adjust himself to the tremendum by understanding its nature and how to use it. It is possible that the rejection of science by religion, and of theology by science, is only the old war of religions on a new front, and that science seems a threat to old formulations of religion precisely because it is a new formulation of man's relation to the tremendum, actually a totally new form of religion itself. I believe that that is precisely the case and that the emergence of this type of thinking, which followers of the old religions continue to mark as irreligious, signifies the emergence of a new religion. The new religion takes a new attitude toward the tremendum: It no longer hides its head, ostrich-fashion, in myths asserting that the tremendum is less perilous than it is; it no longer surrenders to the tremendum, and asks to be reabsorbed into it. Instead, refusing either to run away or to surrender, it accepts the tremendum, and the individual's helplessness and insignificance before it. It drops no curtain, but faces the overwhelming within and without, while it seeks to find relationships and meaning as far as it can by its own new method. The new religion of science, and most of the men and women who practise it, have few illusions. Few of them want to discuss the nature of reality, or work from *a prioris*, except the basic one announced by Einstein, that the only thing unintelligible about the universe is that it should be intelligible. To assert that the universe is universally intelligible would indeed be another painted curtain. Certainly it is not intelligible now. But society finds itself deluged with the apparently limitless flow of dimes from the jackpot of nature which the scientific conception of intelligibility has released upon us. As TheodoreSizer remarked the other day, the new deluge, in the eyes of millions, has been enormously rewarding but depressingly stupefying. In other words, science has released not only gadgets and dimes to engulf us, but has stupefied us with the tremendum itself, and that in a way for which we have formed no protective devices. It has often stupefied even the scientists in their private lives, but does not do so in the lives of those truly dedicated to the new point of view, people whom I may call the saints of science. Many of them have a private logion, such as that of the great astronomer Harlow Shapley, who, as he looks in his telescope, or does his celestial mathematics, mutters to himself: "All nature is God, all God is nature." He approaches this nature-God, however, not by traditional

forms of worship, but through his observations and calculations, which have become his sacrament. No one in this room has a conception of the immensity of the universe, or of the smallness of man in it, comparable to Shapley's. But the tremendum has no terror for him. He looks at it with quiet eyes, astonished, reverent, but unafraid. He carried this attitude over to society and politics when McCarthy created fear and trembling. He regarded Senatorial Committees for Hysteria with the same calm eyes, and spoke up to them as, in his mathematics, he speaks up to the universe. Throughout he keeps his integrity, his dignity, as an ignorant but seeking human being. This, gentlemen, is religion pure and undefiled, and we do ourselves, and our subject, small service if we fail to recognize it as such.

Much of this spirit must become ours. For we can hardly call ourselves scientists of religion if we systematically define religion so as to leave out this great approach to the tremendum going on all about us, and refuse ourselves to share it. In the mid-twentieth century we will seem ridiculous to our generation if we call ourselves scientists but do not examine our data in the same factual and calm spirit. We cannot announce the nature of the tremendum, but must content ourselves with shuttling back and forth between data and hypotheses, happy when one of our hypotheses proves useful, but quite undismayed and willing to discard them when others do not. For our faith, like that of all scientists, will be that the process will eventually advance us to sounder understanding, not that our hypotheses of the moment have ultimate validity.

In such study our audience will be small. We shall have little that will seem valuable to the great mass of men who live within the curtains of a revelation or within the far narrower and uglier curtains of indifferent and insensitive preoccupations, which are the local and private blinders of much of our modern society.

And what, exactly, will be our data?

For Religionswissenschaft in general the data will be of many kinds. No field of human activity, really, can be thought irrelevant. We may get most important suggestions from the study of psychology of all sorts, from all sociological studies, including, of course, anthropology and law. Increasingly the new linguistics, whether as a study of the structure of language, the more accurate approaches to etymology, or the whole new philosophy of semantics, will help us. The worlds of creativity in art, literature, and music are worlds of religion. No one person can deal with such diversified data. We who are presently met together particularly concern ourselves with the sacred literatures and ethics, as well as the myths and rituals, of people of the world from earliest times to the present. Insofar as our study of this is scientific, it will involve detailed analyses conducted with full awareness of the best understanding others have achieved from such data up to the point of our own investigation. It is not, if we are analyzing Pahlavi texts from Iran and India, that we will know merely all former suggestions for the meaning of those particular texts, but that we shall know similar analyses elsewhere, so that our work will

add at once to the understanding of the particular texts, and also to the general technique of textual analysis. This brings us one step nearer the tremendum, since the phenomenology of textual transmission has broad horizons. If analysis of our particular data takes us into strange fields, we go out into them. It is a common experience that one analyzing texts in one language will find cognate texts in another language, so that he must stop and learn the other language. It may be that a scientific study of rabbinical law is going to require knowledge of Greek and Roman law, or, for the Babylonian Talmud, of the laws of Babylonia. In that case the obligation before the scholar is clear. There are limits to this, the limits of human capacity and length of life. We often must publish, using data beyond our expert competence. Such publication must not only state the limits of the author, but be written by an author who will always bear in mind that what he writes is beyond his expert control.

Herein we can never fulfill the ideals of a natural scientist, who can so control his observations that they involve no extraneous variables. But at this point I hear the chuckles from my scientific friends. Of course that is the ideal, they say, but just what experiment of any but routine importance was ever done in any science when all variables were controlled? Scientists try to recognize those variables, and take them into account, they tell me, but the advance of science has largely meant that the next person discovers variables that had not been suspected at all. The tremendum again.

We can hope to reestablish a science of religion not insofar as we take over too slavishly the various methods now used in other sciences. Scientists have to invent new methods for apprising each new type of data. Science has only one method, and that is to devise in each case and for each body of data or for each question a method, usually quite ad hoc, which will yield the most adequate understanding of that data. But the questions scientists ask of their data are relatively small ones. Science advances only bit by bit, and most scientists regard the questions of philosophy as quite outside their proper realm, indeed as hybris when they invade science itself.

Scientists, however, can never lose sight of the fact that the particular problem is always part of a larger problem, for only in that relation lies scientific creativity. We hope to clarify the larger problem by solving the smaller, but in simply solving the smaller we are technicians and antiquarians, not people adding to scientific knowledge at all. The great prophets of science, or the great historians, have been masters of their techniques (though in this they have often had research assistants who could correct them sharply), yet they have been supreme because they have gone beyond the techniques of what I may call the Pharisees of science. Creative scientists, like creative painters and musicians, advance into the tremendum as they try methods never used, join the hitherto unconnected, break all rules as they seem inadequate, even though earlier men had found those rules useful. Science, like religion, has been led and fed by men who have used their micrometers, but looked beyond them. For the spark of new light always is an understanding of the data which the data themselves do not give to those whose eyes focus too narrowly upon them.

In studying the data of man's religious history we too must look beyond the data. But not too fast. We must look how and for what? Look by the most detailed study for a spark of new light on man as a *homo religiosus*. A young geologist remarked to me the other day that the modern scientist works always confronted by the vastness of unknown nature. But he does not drop his tools to generalize about it. He works on his own specific problem. Our specific problems will be somewhat analogous to those who investigate native herbal medicaments to see if they can find their value (many had great value), and so get suggestions of new drugs for our own use. Somewhat similarly we would ask: What actually lies behind the values men have found in myths, mystic philosophies and practices, rituals, and symbols? As historians of religion this will be our specific field of investigation. Before we can do any valuable generalization, we must do a great deal of careful detailed study of local phenomena. We must beware of the occupational disease of people in our fields, which is to make such generalizations about religious phenomena as were made by the great leaders in Religionswissenschaft of the last century. The old method, still by no means abandoned, was to think we are proving such generalizations if we can give examples of cases where we think they apply. It is almost impossible not to fall into this error if we make too large generalizations too soon. In fields where evidence is hopelessly inadequate, we must work with hypotheses supported only by a few instances. But in those cases we work fully aware of the hypothetical nature of our conclusions, as a biologist must do in discussing the stages of evolution. At the present stage of the Science of Religion, we would do well to ask small questions until we have established a methodology we can all approve and use.

Such a procedure does not mean that we will ever lose sight of our true objective, total understanding. But we must face the tremendum qua tremendum, not reject old curtains only to put up new curtains of hasty generalizations. Most of us will be technicians, turning up carefully verified hypotheses about small and isolated problems. We also will have our reward. Always, however, we shall hope that new Curies and Einsteins will come in our field to use what we have been doing, and go far beyond it into a new dimension. The tremendum about us and within us will still have n dimensions. Religionswissenschaft in the mid-twentieth century can take us not to total understanding (perish the hybris), but to somewhat greater comprehension of man in his religious problem. It can do so only as we combine science and religion in our very marrow, combine them into a dedication to learning about religion by the slow, dogged approach of science. I know no other way in which we can hope eventually to understand better the *homo religiosus*, religion itself, and avoid the agony which Sanday felt when he killed in order to dissect. For if we still have to kill the old dream that religion is a matter of revelation, through Religionswissenschaft we may discover that the scalpel itself has become a sacramental instrument.

That is, gentlemen, we must learn this much, at least, from psychoanalysis, that we cannot understand other people until we understand our-

selves. In calling the myths and theologies of religions painted curtains, designs so drawn in perspective that one forgets the flat canvas on which they are painted, I have, of course, only partially described the function and value of traditional religions. To change the figure, the projections of men have often been dream ropes they have thrown up into the tremendum, and then have miraculously been able to climb them a little. All human development has taken place as men have dreamed, for example, of social justice, and then spent the millenia from the beginnings of tribal justice to hopes of the One World in climbing that rope. We who are here study religions because we know that much of great value has been painted on men's curtains, that mankind has actually climbed on those ropes. We know also that much that was hideously destructive has been taught in the name of religion. The great new hope, I believe, is in Religionswissenschaft itself, which proposes minutely to examine the *homo religiosus*, including ourselves as *homines religiosi*, quite aware that over-all and hasty generalizations only curtain us off, again, from our subject. We should use the curtainless procedures of science, whose essential temper was oddly best expressed by that curtain-bound genius, Cardinal Newman, when, although hating free inquiry of any sort, he wrote

I do not ask to see the distant shore:
One step enough for me.

Religionswissenschaft writes no popular books, no simplified summaries for Sophomores. Perhaps we must make our living doing this, but we must recognize in it no part of our real business. If we here decide to form a national society for the History of Religions, we must build it as a body around the soul of the new age, which sees human existence as the endless road of inquiry. Science offers no royal road to knowledge, but an unblazed trail into the wilderness, where, if we travel with understanding, we travel with awareness of its vastness, but move from tree to tree.

So we shall take to ourselves the advice of the ancient rabbi: "He who grasps much, grasps nothing; he who grasps little, really grasps."



